



Chapter Ten: By the End of the Night

Though I didn't set an alarm, I woke up extra early. I was excited to go shopping on Fifth Avenue a few days before Christmas. It was going to be an experience with people everywhere and bright, beautiful lights. The cold made it feel like the holiday season was really here, and the music seemed to float from every opened door.

I had already ordered some individual cases for Jasper's special guns, his childhood BB, his grandfather's rifle, and the engraved six-shooter, so he could display them in our shared office space. But I need to get him something else.

And I wanted him.

Stretching my arms above my head, I grinned as I popped my spine. Jasper was still asleep beside me on his stomach with his face shoved into the pillow. He had dozens of marks on his back as well as his ass and thighs. I could see where our new heavier riding crop bit at his skin, leaving little streaks. I leaned down to kiss one of them lightly, letting my lips linger against it. Then I moved to another. He groaned quietly as he rolled over, pushing his hand over his forehead. There were several hickies on his chest around his nipples. Tiny pink and red

circles ringed each. I had spent a long time teasing him when he was tied to a chair. Playfully, I nipped one.

He drew in a hissing breath through his teeth as his fingers moved into my curls. "Mm, good morning, darlin." He pulled me into a deep kiss.

"Good morning, Dr. Hale."

A naughty smile tugged at his mouth. "Oh, is that the game we're going to play tonight?"

"Doctor and patient?" I asked against his lips. I pecked them lightly as he nodded. "Therapy or a medical scene?"

He rolled us over so he was on top of me. "Hm... We could discuss your dark fantasies, Isabella," his nose moved over my earlobe as he whispered in a low voice. "Tell me your deepest desires. All the filthy things that make you feel like a dirty little slut."

Gasping, I attacked him. Neither of us was wearing clothing, so he was able just to push inside of me without having to stop. Every moment was so fluid.

"I need to be fucked hard." I scratched my nails down his back to his ass. It caused his hips to flex, pressing him more deeply inside.

Spinning me onto my stomach, he wrapped a handful of my hair around his fist as he pushed into me from behind. I whimpered in pleasure. Tugging it forcefully, he made sure he was as deep as he could go. His hips pressed to my ass. He pulled back and slammed into me. My fingers twisted into the pillowcase. "Like that, whore?"

"Yes!" I whined, pushing back so that we were flush again. My body was lifted off the mattress just a little, my face and knees pressed to it.

"Play with your clit," he gruffly ordered. I shoved my arm underneath me, between my legs and the bed. Already wet, it dripped down my fingers as he moved in me, pumping so hard that it was making the heavy bedframe shift and groan. It was so good. "Fuck, it's hard to stay in, you get so tight." He let go of my hair and wrapped both hands around my hips so he could have more control. His short nails dug into my fleshy ass. "Cum on my cock." His voice was almost enough to get me there. My movements were erratic and desperate. "Damn... You make such a fucking mess."

When my moment came, I screamed out into the mattress. He slapped my bottom hard. It didn't quiet me down in the least. My toes curled into the sheets. But it didn't bring the relief I desperately wanted. My body was still wound too tight, and I needed to feel him. "Pull out and cum on me," I begged.

After a few more pumps, he withdrew and stroked himself. He grunted and hissed through his teeth as he let go. I could feel it run up my back and between my thighs as he purposefully spread it around. It was so warm and satisfying. Something about it made me want to melt with pleasure into the blankets.

When he was done, he moved his fingers between my legs. "You know, I don't remember ordering a wake-up call, Mrs. Hale, but thank you." He began to massage my clit. "I've enjoyed it immensely."

"You're welcome," I answered breathlessly. I pushed my face into the pillows, trying to quiet the cries that were coming out of my mouth. "How do you know how to do that with your hands?"

He curled his fingers a certain way. "Practice and attention to your reactions. When you're too sensitive and need me to slow down or arching your back for more. Your noises. It's about keeping up the rhythm of your body. You're leading, and I'm just following along, but if I do it right, I can make you dance."

My next orgasm was gradual but powerful, drawn-out over a minute or two. It was so incredible, no sound came out of my mouth. Afterward, he laid beside me with a smile. I turned my face to the side to give him a soft kiss. We relaxed for several minutes, basking in the afterglow of perfect morning sex.

"Mm, today is going to be such a marvelous day. I get to spend it with you, buying gifts for all the people I love, and then I'm going to make a lot of money tonight," I blurted out with a content sigh in my voice. I was still floating on air.

Jasper chuckled. "Yes, you are." He kissed my temple. "I'm going to run to the bathroom and start the shower."

"Mm... sounds good."

After our leisurely breakfast, we started moving through the massive crowds. There was so much noise from the people and cars. The wind whipped my hair around my head, the cold biting at my nose, but I loved it. My husband held my hand, keeping a close eye on everyone near us. But in the throngs, we were just another couple, and no one cared about us. Between hats, scarfs, and heavy coats, it was hard to recognize anyone.

In the first hour of shopping, I bought AirPods for Alice and Tanya. I wanted to go to Tiffany's to get things for my mother- and sister-in-law. Cartier, too. They were all fairly close together. We had so many bags already. Jasper said nothing, though. He was just happy I was having a good time. He would carry anything I asked.

We wandered around the jewelry store for a few moments before my husband cleared his throat. I was having trouble deciding. "Since we're here, I'm going to do a little shopping myself." He kissed my cheek. "Do you think you'll be okay by yourself for a few minutes?"

I smirked. "Yeah, I think I'll be fine. We're surrounded by people, and there are cameras everywhere. It's alright, honey. You should be more worried about me trying to figure out what you're getting me."

He returned my expression. "Who says it's for you?" I purposefully played with my lock and key necklace that never left my neck. I knew exactly where he got it from, though the Tiffany's in Dallas was much smaller. "You know what? You finish your shopping and worry about yourself." I giggled at his playful tone and thick accent as his cheeks turned pink. I crossed my arms over my chest. He spun his fingers over my head. "Just turn around and keep your eyes to yourself, young lady."

When I did, he swatted my ass before hurrying away. When I looked over my shoulder, he almost instantly got lost in the crowd.

Caroline and Mamaw were easy. I got them both beautiful cross necklaces in unique designs. Emmett and Rosalie got matching his and hers watches. Justin got a fancy key ring. I had also ordered them both home draft machines with a couple of small kegs in different flavors they liked. They were already at the house. Last Christmas, I had been unprepared, and that wouldn't happen again. They had gone out of their way to make me feel like a part of their family, and I wanted to thank them for that.

I was still in the men's section when I came across a pair of cuff links in the shape of a lock. They matched my necklace in the same rose gold. It instantly brought a smile to my face.

"May I have these, too?" I asked the saleswoman patiently following me around. She had a small basket filled with my choices hanging off of her arm. It was half-loaded with the baby blue packages.

"Of course!" She grinned. I wasn't sure if they made commissions, but I was an easy customer. She didn't have to talk me into anything.

"I think that's probably it," I informed her. "I might be going overboard now."

She nodded her head quickly, her neat dreads bouncing around her shoulders. "Yes, ma'am. I'll get these rung up for you. Would you like them wrapped?"

"Yes, please," I grinned. Anything that would save me the trouble of wrapping. I had bought too many things already and was creating a lot of work for myself once we got home. I

wrote out who each gift was to go to before handing her my debit card. Not once did I look at the prices of anything. It was thrilling. I knew I was spending thousands, but it was our first Christmas together as a married couple, and I wanted it to be special in every single way.

Jasper still hadn't returned, and it would take a little while for my presents to be wrapped, so I peered around more. Just as I turned to move to another case, I caught a glimpse of familiar red hair. It was only a flash, but I had sat behind it so much that I recognized it right away. It was one of the DAs, Ms. Rachelle. She was about twenty feet away with a man. I couldn't think of her boyfriend's name or even tell if it was the same person. I just remember his intense eyes and long mane. Turning, I tried to find her in the crowd, but she was gone as quickly as I saw her. There were too many people in the sea of heavily jacketed bodies.

Someone touched my back from behind. "What's the matter, darlin'?" Jasper questioned in my ear.

Jumping in shock, I automatically laughed at my reaction. "Oh! Nothing! I just thought I saw one of the lawyers from the trial, but I'm not sure. I don't see her now."

"That doesn't surprise me too much," he commented with a slight smile. "I imagine a lot of people around the Northeast come into the city to shop for Christmas."

"If we see her again, we should say hi," I remarked. He nodded in agreement. All the attorneys had been so kind to us. "I'm getting some stuff wrapped. It shouldn't be too much longer."

He touched my cheek, skimming his leather-gloved finger over my jaw. Jasper was looking at me in such a loving way. It made my heart skip a little beat. "Where else would you like to go?"

"Mm, let's go to Times Square and the enormous candy stores there. I want to buy some sweets for everyone, too. Then we should probably head back to get cleaned up before the meeting."

"Sounds good," he agreed right away before pecking my lips.

Eric was waiting in front of the restaurant he picked for us. It was a Spanish place with pleasant Latin music playing softly over the speakers. I was looking forward to tapas. We skipped lunch, and I was hungry. My agent never disappointed me with his taste in food.

Right away, he pulled me into a hug and kissed my cheek. "There's my million dollar baby. You look stunning as always."

“Ugh, you are so terrible for my ego,” I teased as I removed my coat. He helped me. “Thank you.”

“Dr. Hale,” he offered as he shook his hand when he was done. He took my jacket from his grip. “Did you have a good day?”

“It was quite pleasant,” he replied with a smile. “I was more there for heavy lifting than anything else.”

“And for looking sexy,” I sassed as I removed my gloves. He smirked over my agent’s head at me.

He snorted and wiggled his eyebrows playfully at me. “And he does both so well.” I swatted Eric’s arm with one of them, making him chuckle. “Mr. Von said he’ll be here in a few minutes, and we could go ahead and sit down.”

“Great, because my feet are killing me,” I complained. When we were at the table. I looked at my friend seriously. “Will I be signing any contracts tonight?”

“I don’t know about the signing, but we’ll probably be shaking on it. I’ll presumably send it to you next week to look over and sign. But let him woo you. Make him sell it. You are an artist, and you don’t waste your time on people who don’t take your art seriously.” He tapped his finger on the table during the final sentence, poking it between each word to make a point. His nail clicked on the tabletop.

Jasper glanced at me, raising an eyebrow. “Don’t be too wooed, please.” He said it so dryly. I snorted in response. But then his expression changed as his eyes got huge. I turned to see what he was looking at.

About five feet behind me was a massive olive-skinned fellow with choppy black hair. He was at least a few inches taller than either man and three times as broad. He reminded me of Arnold Schwarzenegger.

“Hello, darling!” He spoke in a thick German accent. It was not what I was expecting. It was soft and smooth. “I am so pleased to meet you.” He brought me into a hug before I said anything. His cologne smelled expensive on his perfectly pressed shirt. “Your stunning pictures do not do you justice. You are much lovelier in person.”

“Oh, my goodness,” I giggled awkwardly. “Thank you.”

He put his hand up. “No, thank you for allowing me to sit down with you. You are a better writer than me, and I must ask you a million questions.”

"I doubt that," I breathed. "I'm only a beginner. You're a winner. There's an enormous difference."

"Yes, you are just beginning, and you are already incredible! Your award shelves will overflow by the time you've been in the business as long as I have." He placed his hand on his heart. "I have a bookcase, but you'll need an entire storage room. See, I have done this for twenty years, and I know a champion. I read your book, and I saw one. I saw our future best picture movie and a classic that will be taught in master-classes. 'This, children, is how we build proper suspense. This is how we foreshadow.'"

Oh, he was going to do a fantastic job of wooing me. Blinking, I stared with my mouth hanging open just a little. My cheeks were on fire. I was stupidly easy to compliment. I was glad Eric was there to guide me through these decisions.

"I couldn't agree with you more," my agent said as he came around the table to shake his hand. "It is so good to meet you in person, Mr. Von."

He took it in his massive paw right away. I think he was even bigger than Emmett. His jolly personality reminded me of him, too. "No, no. I'm Felix, please. I'm not that old." He turned his attention to Jasper. "You must be the agent from the dedication page. Good evening, doctor."

"I am. I'm also her biggest fan, and I agree with you, too."

Grinning, he looked at me. We were still standing by the table. "Please help me write this masterpiece. No one else could do it justice but you." He put his hands on my shoulders. I had to bend my head entirely back to look into his face.

"I've never written a screenplay before."

"And before this year, you never had the best-selling novel in the entire world. There is a first time for everything." He winked. "Come, let us eat and talk more."

We sat down with our menus. I reached for Jasper's hand under the table. I was so glad he was there. For some reason, I was feeling overwhelmed, though I wasn't sure why. Maybe it was just his sheer size, but I was afraid of him. But he did seem genuinely nice, or he was a superb actor.

"You should know that we've got a lot of other offers already, and we could afford to wait to see what else comes in," Eric explained to him, flipping the menu page. There were several. He looked up at him with a cocky smile. "Yours is... extremely attractive, though."

Felix nodded in understanding. "Yes. I would imagine you'd get many trying to buy this. Not all are good, though. In the wrong hands, it could just be another cheesy mystery. But I want to give the characters the same complex weight as the book. And I want their sins to show in the way they talk and the way they act. I want the reality of their personalities to shine through," he spoke passionately. "I need my favorite book of the past five years to be the best movie I've ever made. It will be my greatest achievement. Ms. Swan, I can only accomplish that with you."

"Mrs. Hale," I corrected him automatically as I sat up straighter in my chair. I squared my shoulders more confidently as I remembered who I was. I wasn't meek, and I wouldn't be pushed around because I was worth this and deserved success. "But you can call me Bella."

By the end of the night, Eric and I shook his hand in agreement.